

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

MARCH 1980

Pres: Mr G. Sitch
Sec: Mr S. Bruton
Treas: Mr L. Bransgrove
Newsletter: Mr G. Broadway

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ORCHIDS OF THE CASTLEMAINE DISTRICT Number 26 of a series

by Rita Mills

CALEANA MAJOR

(Flying Duck Orchid)

Flowering time: Late November and
December



This slender, smooth plant is found at Glenluce, and is reputed to be at Barker's Creek, although I haven't seen it there. The stem, with its 1 to 5 distinct flowers is about 30 cm high. The single leaf is narrow and ribbed, red-brown in colour and 5 to 12 cm in length.

The flower is predominantly dark red-brown and is shaped, as the name suggests, like a duck in flight. It is a reversed flower - that is it is borne upside down and the head of the duck is the tongue or labellum. The body of the duck is the column with broad wings and a sticky green disc which holds the pollen. The sepals and petals are inconspicuous and thrown back like wings.

DON'T FORGET
CHECK YOUR DIARY
BRING A FRIEND

Photoflora '80

JUDGING PANEL:

A. J. Hartup, A.F.I.A.P.
Frances Poole
J. H. Willis

LIBRARY HALL
BARKER STREET
CASTLEMAINE
March 21 8 p.m.



BRUSH-TAILED PHASCOGALE

Phascogale tapoatafa (Meyer)

PHASCOGALES AT BARKER'S CREEK

. . . by Wyn Palmer

Members of this club may recall some notes in the July '79 issue of the "Castlemaine Naturalist", on the discovery of sugar gliders living and breeding in hollow logs which we had hung up in trees on our block.

During January of this year we had occasion to take down one of the nest logs, and, on removing the lid, found it to be about half full of moss and other fibrous material. Upon further investigation, a furry animal with bushy tail, pointed nose, very adequate ears and large round eyes, emerged. It quickly escaped and raced about 30 feet up the tree from where it regarded us with suspicion.

Not knowing what it was we contacted Mrs Mills who came armed with her new binoculars, and after studying the creature, told us it was a Phascogale. She remarked that she hadn't seen one for years - we had never seen one before.

I have lived in the district since 1965 without seeing a live specimen until recently. While returning home late one night from Joyce's Creek recently a small animal dashed into the middle of the road ahead of the car and froze in the headlights. Closer inspection of its size and the long black bushy tail quickly identified it as a Brush-Tailed Phascogale. If this behaviour is typical, it is not surprising that road-killed specimens are not infrequently brought in to the school for identification.

. . . Ed.

Club Officers : At the last committee meeting held on Thurs Feb 28 the following portfolios were allocated:-

Collator of record cards - Max Winterbottom. Library - Frank Blake
News and publicity - Rita Mills. Meeting Posters - Merrilyn Mills
Vacancies exist for a Recorder of Observations and for an Organiser of the Supper Roster. Can you help? If so, please notify the Sec.

OBSERVATIONS FOR MARCH

If it is not too late by the time you receive your copy of the newsletter, watch out for the following (among other things of course). Please try to make a note of the date of any interesting sightings.

1. Gum Emperor : Watch out for the large green caterpillars and note if you find them what sort of foliage they are feeding on. Watch out too for the large oval brown cocoons.
2. Case Moths : Young should be about at present. If seen, note whether they are using bits of leaf or stick to make their cases.
3. Observe any cases of ants climbing over plants and try to find out what it is that is attracting them.
4. Centipedes : Are any to be found inside the house lately ? Possibly ones with long, delicate legs.
5. Planets : In the Eastern sky during the February evenings 2 bright objects have been visible, these are the planets Jupiter and Mars. Mars is easily distinguished because of its characteristic reddish tinge. At the end of February Jupiter was slightly to the West of Mars. In what way are they moving relative to the stars and to each other? If you have binoculars, how many moons can you see around Jupiter ?

Further to the East is another less bright object, this is the planet Saturn. Venus at present is the evening star which may be seen in the Western sky in the early evening. Venus is in fact bright enough to be seen before sunset - can you find it ? Venus is never seen high almost overhead like Jupiter - why is this ?

6. One member has commented that starlings seem to be assembling in large flocks on the ground recently. Is this unusual behaviour ? Would it be a seasonal occurrence or would it be related to the long dry spell ? Check your starlings - what are they doing ?
7. Other members report having more than the usual number of blackbirds in the garden this year. Do other members find this ? Is the blackbird multiplying, perhaps at the expense of native species ?

Editorial We do not usually have editorials, but on this occasion it does seem appropriate to express a word of appreciation to Mr Ern Perkins who done such an excellent job as Editor of the "Castlemaine Naturalist" since its inception. To you, Ern, thanks very much for a job well done, and to you other members a plea for tolerance and for assistance so that we may continue the good work. If you have an item for publication do not hesitate to hand it to the editor who will be extremely grateful.

CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB PROGRAM

MEETINGS

Fri Mar 14 Members Night.
Members please remember to contribute an item to the evening. A slide projector will be available.

Fri Mar 21 Photoflora 80
Library Hall, at 8.00 p.m.
Admission : Adults 51.50
Children .80
Family 4.00

Members are asked to please bring a plate for supper, and if possible to help with some of the jobs - ticket sales, arranging seats, making tea, etc.

Fri Apr 11 Bee-keeping and Native Flora

Speaker: Mr Ray Campbell of Bendigo

Fri May 9 Birds

Speaker : Mr C Burt

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Volunteers Wanted

The club needs a delegate to represent it at the W.V.F.N.C. meeting at Port Campbell on Sat Ap 12. If you would like to make the trip, please notify the President or Secretary.

Notes from Committee
Concern was expressed following the "clean up" of Campbell's Creek recently, which involved removal of several trees. It was felt that the club should seek from council a statement of its aims. Club members who have not already done so should inspect the work in case a vote is taken

EXCURSIONS

Sat - Mon Mar 8,9,10 Benalla
Vic Field Nat. Club Assn. campout at Benalla. Included in the program is Sat Mar 8: Excursion to Lake Mokoan/Warby Range area. Afternoon only. Sun Mar 8 all day; possibly to the Mt Samaria area.
Mon Mar 10, morning trip to Reef Hills Accommodation and meetings will be at the old army camp,
Of special interest is the fact that the speaker at the Annual Meeting on Sat evening will be Mr E.Perkins of this club, but formerly of the Benalla club.
Further details from Mr Perkins.

Sun Mar 16 Wombat Forest
Leader: Mr John Harris, Forestry Office Daylesford.
Leave Ed Centre at 10.00 a.m. SHARP
Or meet Daylesford P.O. at 10.30 a.m.

Sat Apr 12 Black Hill North of Kyneton. Leave Ed.Centre at 1.30p.m.
Leaders : Alex Smart and Wendy Hill, President and Secretary of Friends of Black Hill

Fri - Sun Apr 11 - 13 Port Campbell
This is a West. Vic. Field Nats, Clubs campout.

Fri 11. Penguins at London Bridge, or glow-worms; Dance in community hall

Sat Ap 12 Clifton Beach, Princetown where fossil shells may be found.
Bay of Islands Peterborough,
6 p.m. meeting
8 p.m. Talk by Nat. Parks Officer then slides.

Sun 13 : Melba Gully , Lavers Hill

to decide club policy on this matter.